



## Syed and Sakina Mehdi


Care Coordinator, Arlette first met Sakina and Syed when their second son, Abdullah, needed support with his development. Through this connection, they found guidance, clarity and much needed relief, now equipped with the information and a plan. With Arlette and their team, they learned that both their sons—Nuh, their oldest, and Abdullah—live with autism, each with unique needs requiring individualized supports.

Navigating multiple organizations, ministries and funding applications quickly became part of their reality. Eager to learn all they could and to seize every opportunity to best support their children, they participated in planning meetings, webinars and workshops to help understand the diverse needs, patterns and behaviours and the best methods to support neuromotor development, and early learning strategies. Together, they attended appointments and specialized programs, offered by organizations such as Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, Surrey Place, Silent Voice Canada and Bob Rumball Canadian Centre of Excellence for the Deaf. These experiences supported their children's growth, movement and communication, including non-verbal methods and sign language as well as social and life skills that they continue to this day.

At home, they've created a supportive environment, weaving in therapy strategies into daily routines. Their belief in their children's potential remained constant. With encouragement and consistency their children have made meaningful progress in motor, social and communication skills, an incredible achievement given the time and attention needed to nurture these skills, that were especially challenging while navigating a pandemic and welcoming their third child, Amira.

Today, Nuh, 7, Abdullah, 5 and Amira recently 2, each live with varying neurological and developmental conditions that require both shared and individual support. Daily life includes carefully tailored routines, equipment and communication approaches, with Abdullah and Amira, who is also deaf, communicating non-verbally. Through every challenge, Sakina and Syed have shown unwavering resilience and commitment, ensuring each child's needs are met at school, in specialized day care and at home in the various programs they attend. Never discouraged, they focus on meeting each child where they are, striving for progress and taking every opportunity to celebrate each milestone big or small, because they recognize how important these achievements are.

They are strong advocates for their children, always considering both present and future needs. They prioritize opportunities for them to connect, build confidence and develop skills, participating in both specialized and community programs as often as they can. For Nuh, this has meant trying new sports



like Taekwondo and soccer. And when Syed noticed his response to playing with a team he encouraged him to take on the role of goalie, turning what would be a challenge and a need for space into a strength, with a focus and a purpose, Syed harnessed his attention while also giving Nuh the space shifting from feeling different to having a super power and now a strong member of the team. When concerns arise at school or in programs, Syed and Sakina gently shift the focus to their children's strength and progress highlighting abilities such as reading and signing and reinforcing just how far they have all come.

Both have taken sign language classes to better communicate with Abdullah and Amira, an added commitment especially as Sakina had paused her English courses to focus on their children's needs. These efforts have brought meaningful moments including when Amira recently signed her first word. "Dad."

In 2025, their caregiving role expanded further when Syed's father was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer. As his health quickly and aggressively declined, they moved into his home to provide full time care, requiring Nuh to change schools and adjust to a new environment. Despite these added pressures, they remained focused on their children's progress, working closely with educators to ensure learning plans reflected abilities and not limitations.

After Syed's father passed away on January 1<sup>st</sup>, he approached estate planning and funeral planning with the same care and diligence he brought to parenting - thoughtful, informed and deeply rooted in family and cultural values. Through it all, Sakina and Syed have remained committed to nurturing their children's growth while also creating much needed space for connection and joy. They make time for events and outings as a family to connect beyond their busy routines, therapies and appointments, this time very meaningful getting out as often as they can.

In sharing their experience, they emphasized that it was through Arlette's support and advocacy that their world of possibilities truly opened up. Arlette has been an integral and devoted member of their care team and journey, supporting each of their children. Over the past 7 years, Syed and Sakina have remained steadfast through the highs and lows, always encouraging their children to find and explore their abilities. Their home is a hub for learning and growth and unflinching gratitude and positivity. They beam with pride when speaking of each of their children, which is why when asking Syed to reflect on the last few years and what they've endured, there was no surprise when he shared how it has given him perspective. That he now sees what truly matters and to him it's his family and being able to support them as best he can, always motivated and truly inspired by his beloved children.

**Thank you for going Above and Beyond!**